Commencement 2007: Beyond the Divide
By Scott L. Pratt  Associate Professor and Interim Associate Dean of Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences

Let me begin by congratulating you, graduates, on your achievement. At some point in the distant past you made a commitment (perhaps over some objections) to the study of philosophy. You have persisted through the History of Philosophy sequence, the logic course, author courses on the likes of Simone de Beauvoir, Schelling, Hume, Emerson, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre. You have spent long nights discussing the meaning of life and annoying your friends with questions about what they mean when they say this or that. You have written thousands of words and consumed gallons of coffee through hundreds of sleepless nights. You have challenged your teachers, you have listened to responses (sometimes discarding them), and you have challenged yourselves to question more and commit to answers, if only until the next question is asked. As a result you have become philosophers of a higher order—human beings aware of their need to look beyond the here and now and possessing the skills to do so.

Josiah Royce was the quintessential American philosopher. Born in Grass Valley, California, in 1855 and raised in mining camps, he became a philosopher at Harvard and spent most of his life trying to understanding how, in a world of displacement and boundaries, human beings can still find meaning. In his early classic history of philosophy, Royce said this about the work of philosophers: “You philosophize when you reflect critically upon what you are actually doing in the world. What you are doing of course is, in the first place, living. And life involves passions, faiths, doubts, and courage. The critical inquiry into what all these things mean and imply is philosophy.” Such work is not easy and is certainly not well paid, but it is a crucial work, especially in times like these.

Even as I acknowledge your success, I find myself on the side of your parents—wondering what these years in school have made of you, where they will lead, and whether or not you will get paid when you get there. A few weeks ago, my son Alex graduated from Beloit College in Wisconsin, the same college that his mother Mary and I graduated from some time ago. Beloit’s commencement speaker was notable for saying at the start of his address that if he couldn't be funny, at least he could be brief, and then for proving himself wrong—he was neither funny nor brief. To be safe, I won’t make such a claim (there is a chance I won't be funny and I am incapable of being brief—as many of you know). The celebration of Alex’s graduation ended when he and I loaded a sixteen-foot U-Haul with an apartment full of furniture and headed west on Interstate 80; just our luck that the U-Haul was getting nine miles per gallon—Continued on page 2
Another year is under way, with early, cold rains moistening the frantic pace that excited students and faculty members can’t help but generate. While I miss the seventy or so students we graduated during spring term and summer session, including eight or so Ph.D.s, I’m also thrilled to welcome new graduate and undergraduate students to our percolating, ever-growing community.

The undergraduate philosophy club continues to thrive, and the graduate students are as active as ever, presenting work at conferences and distinguishing themselves in the classroom. And just like last year, the two populations will join the faculty in a one-day conference, with this year’s theme being “What Is Philosophy?”

The year ahead is full of other conferences as well. In fact, we will play host (or cohost) to four conferences during the winter and spring terms, and each will bring folk from around the world to Eugene. Moreover, the topics represent the diversity and ingenuity of our program: Chinese philosophy, environmental philosophy, feminist phenomenology, Latin American philosophy, and intersections and contestations between Continental and Anglo-American philosophy. If you can, I hope you’ll join us for one or more of these. (See page 5 for more about these events.)

In the winter, we also will undergo a program review, which will bring three distinguished philosophers to campus for the sole purpose of evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of our undergraduate and graduate programs. In preparation for their visit, we’ve thus embarked on a detailed and thorough self-study. I confess that I very much look forward to working with my colleagues to elevate a program that has already distinguished itself. (If you have any thoughts about these matters that you’d like to share, I’d love to hear them: jlysker@uoregon.edu)

I hope you all are well. Please keep in touch, and visit when you can. A degree in philosophy is the preparation for a life of examination and virtue. We’d love to hear how you are doing with those ever-unfolding tasks.

Best,

John T. Lysaker
Department Head

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record highs. As we rolled across Iowa, talking about his years at Beloit and searching for the local radio stations that feature farm reports and preachers, it became clear to me that much about Alex was familiar—his quick wit, his kindness, his unfortunate irreverence about academe—and that much had also changed, enough so that I had trouble recognizing his interests and plans. At the same time, I think, that felt that I had changed much less than he would have liked and that the return to Oregon was almost turning back the clock.

This problem of encountering unrecognizable aspects of even those closest to us—sons, daughters, parents, friends—is part of the larger problem of our natural limits as human beings. We are, as everyone knows, creatures of habits that at once make our survival possible and at the same time block our ability to experience novelty and to create new possibilities. About this characteristic Royce wrote: “Nothing is more obvious about the natural course of our lives than is the narrowness of view to which we are usually subject. We are not only the victims of conflicting motives, but we are often too narrow to know that this is true. For we see our various life interests, so to speak, one at a time. We forget one while we are living out another. And so we are prone to live many lives, seldom noting how ill harmonized they are. . . . The deeper tragedies of life largely result from . . . our narrowness of view.”

At issue in our narrowness are the boundaries created by our habits and expectations. These limit our view and divide up our lives so that different parts are lost to one another and we are, at every moment, smaller for it. What we fail to see is that when we reach a boundary and step back from it, we are missing a chance. Royce continues: “But over against this narrowness of our ordinary activities there, indeed, stand certain moments when we get a wider vision of ourselves, when we review life, or foresee it with a broad outlook. These are, indeed, moments of insight. . . . What need do they show? I answer, the need to possess what by mere nature we never come to possess, namely, the power to ‘see life steadily and see it whole,’ and then to live triumphantly in the light of this vision. . . . At such a moment [one’s] highest aim is the aim that there should be a highest aim in life, and that this aim should win what it seeks” (Sources of Religious Insight, pp. 48–50).

Seeking a higher aim or a shared vision transforms boundaries from the experience of limits to the experience of possibility. For Royce, encounters with lives beyond our own framed by a higher aim becomes our salvation—the process that brings us out of narrowness and into a larger meaning.

Yet where these aims come from is a real question. Some say that they come from outside or above and our role is only to recognize that they are, in fact, the aims we must pursue. Others think that aims begin as our own choices, as a matter of the will alone. I suspect that both claims are right in a way. If our purposes were not interrupted occasionally through our encounters with others, they would be mere habits carrying us forward with little thought or flexibility. On the other hand, if our purposes were simply imposed, they would not be our purposes. In fact, aims—higher and otherwise—emerge at the border between established expectations and the demands of circumstances beyond us. Not only do higher aims provide a framework for meaning, they are themselves the product of the boundaries that we want to make meaningful. Gloria Anzaldúa, a Latina philosopher and poet who died in 2004, thought a lot about this problem and argued in her book Borderlands/La Frontera that boundaries are unstable territories that call for a particular kind of attitude she called “mestiza consciousness.” This sort of attitude is one that develops “a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity.” The mestiza consciousness “has a plural personality,” Anzaldúa said, “she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad, and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns ambivalence into something else. . . . That focal point or fulcrum, that juncture where the mestiza stands, is where phenomena tend to collide. It is [also] where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs” (p. 101).

There is much to be said about the idea of pluralism as a mat-
Undergraduate Profile

JOEL REYNOLDS

I flirted with a music major (for one year), a business major (for one week), and even a sociology major (for one day), but it only took one hour of my first philosophy course, PHIL 110, Human Nature, and I was smitten—one could even say “at first sight.” (Although many confess it was Lysaker’s good looks, this was not the object of my attention.) Yet the depth of the attraction eluded me until we read Søren Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling, and I found myself unable to stop talking about it, whether with friends, family, or whomever. Kierkegaard approached things which were all too familiar in a way that confounded, provoked, and inspired me like nothing else ever had. That effect was not limited to his writings, however, for I found and continue to find it again and again in new and old texts alike. From Eastern to existential, ancient to nineteenth-century, philosophy is always a step ahead of what I expect it to be. I must admit, however, that philosophy has been less a personal pleasure or discovery and more a personal cathartic. It has been a way for me to look at the disturbing, curious, confusing, and often painful difference between my existence and the ideational structures and strictures which purport to describe, circumscribe, and even inscribe it. I continually examine this divide, usually finding many unsettling things amidst the few reassuring. Moreover, I must say, in all seriousness, that it has been a life-preserving force in times that would have otherwise left me quite unable to pick up the pieces after one too many disjointive protusions into my life. Death has a sobering effect on what one takes one’s existence to be... and to be made of.

One of the things that continues to attract me to philosophy is the way in which words such as “existence” or “life,” for example, can be employed in their widest sense, not merely the psychosomatic being in its sociality and environment but in the encounters and intangibles that politely refuse themselves to language or, a fortiori, to being. In certain hands, the valve to this reading or form of existence—that which takes the excesses in tandem with the expected and the accepted—is shut, is proposed to be shut. In other hands, I would say the softer and defter philosophical hands, it opens up, breaks into, and releases and unleashes the surge of a truly living existence. The distinction, put quite crudely, seems to turn on the word “if.” In the words of Kierkegaard, “the perpetual process of becoming is the uncertainty of earthly life, in which everything is uncertain,” for this is “the illusiveness of the infinite in existence.” In spite of the disparities my life presents to me of itself, in spite of all the “ifs” on which I continually stake it, I have without question learned to hold it much dearer and much more preciously due to the profound combination of adept teachers and mentors and the texts they engage in order to explore, enrich, and, above all, better the world. To these people I will forever be grateful.

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of borders or limits and what it means for individuals, communities, cultures, and nations, but the message in today’s context is that the boundaries reached at the end of study are opportunities to seek higher aims that will connect the past and future in new ways. We need to develop something like the mestiza consciousness Anzaldúa describes to tolerate the contradictions and ambiguities of the moment in order to cross over, as she says, into a “wholly new territory” or, as Royce says, to seek a “city out of sight.”

The study of philosophy is part of that process of encountering limits and seeking higher aims. This process is not unique to philosophy—everyone does this by degree—but philosophers are especially well suited to recognize the process and actively promote attention to the limits and the possibilities that they suggest. Of course, this does not exempt philosophers from their own encounters with narrowness. Crossing the Cascades with Alex after a long and unpleasant argument about whether a college graduate really knows how to drive, how to plan, how to make decisions, I realized that I needed to be a better philosopher and recognize that the boundary marked by graduation was not just a chance for Alex to transcend limits, it was also one for me, and that I would need to think beyond the limits of my habitual concern about present practical matters toward a future that neither of us can see but which we both seek. Today you philosophers are about to cross a boundary. This process, as I said, is not unique to you but you are ready to make something of the crossing both for yourselves and for those around you. You have a contribution to make, to help us to see beyond our limits. Meanwhile, those of us who are your parents, partners, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, friends, mentors, and teachers must be ready to recognize our own narrowness and to look for the higher aim that will connect us in new ways and bring us to new meaning.

There is a poem by Dorianne Laux, a poet in the University of Oregon Creative Writing Program, in her 1994 volume What We Carry that captures the narrowness of our outlook even as it points toward the possibility of going beyond our selves.

DUST

Someone spoke to me last night, told me the truth. Just a few words, but I recognized it. I know I should make myself get up, write it down, but it was late, and I was exhausted from working all day in the garden, moving rocks. Now, I remember only the flavor—not like food, sweet or sharp. More like a fine powder, like dust. And I wasn’t elated or frightened, but simply rapt, aware. That’s how it is sometimes—God comes to your window, all bright light and black wings, and you’re just too tired to open it.

The graduates we honor today, in fact, are coming to our aid and can open the windows we have left shut. For this we should be grateful. And to you, graduates, our thanks for your help in seeking higher aims and our best hopes for your lives to come.
Having been fortunate to contribute to the creation of the new rise to meaning, concepts, and reasoning for creatures like us. Figuring out how our bodily engagement with our world gives conceptual metaphor theory. After that, I became obsessed with Live By, that subsequently opened a new field of research called

In 1980, Lakoff and I wrote a book on metaphor, ability to construct abstract concepts and to reason with them. After I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the irreducibility of metaphor and its indispensability for human thought, I went off to my first job at Southern Illinois University and had my life changed once again when I met the linguist George Lakoff while I held a visiting professorship at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1979. George validated my conviction that meaning involved religious discourse, which was a brand new topic in philosophy. Later, I was, suddenly told that meaning is something concepts and propositions have, and not something life has, or at least that wasn’t the proper focus of philosophy. However, I was either too dense or too stubborn to give up on what I regarded as deep questions about the nature of meaning, and I was never satisfied with the prevalent notion that meaning pertains only to concepts, words, and sentences. I had the great good luck to take Paul Ricoeur’s first class on metaphor and religious discourse, which was a brand new topic in philosophy back then, and it changed my way of thinking about the richness of human meaning.

After I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the irreducibility of metaphor and its indispensability for human thought, I went off to my first job at Southern Illinois University and had my life changed once again when I met the linguist George Lakoff while I held a visiting professorship at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1979. George validated my conviction that meaning involved far more than had yet been glimpsed in the philosophy of language, and he introduced me to cutting-edge developments in linguistics, cognitive psychology, cognitive science, and, eventually, neuroscience. My research and publication for the past thirty years has focused on the bodily grounding of human meaning and on the role of imaginative structures such as metaphor in our ability to construct abstract concepts and to reason with them. In 1980, Lakoff and I wrote a book on metaphor, Metaphors We Live By, that subsequently opened a new field of research called conceptual metaphor theory. After that, I became obsessed with figuring out how our bodily engagement with our world gives rise to meaning, concepts, and reasoning for creatures like us. Having been fortunate to contribute to the creation of the new field of metaphor theory, I then was equally fortunate to jump into this research on embodied cognition, just as researchers in many disciplines were discovering these hitherto unappreciated dimensions of human understanding.

What I’ve found so riveting is all of the amazing new research on the nature of mind, thought, and language that has mushroomed over the past two decades. This work has changed my understanding of what it means to be human, and especially of how we conceptualize and reason. These are terribly exciting times for investigations into how we think, how we communicate, and where our values come from, because we are creating new ways of probing cognitive and emotional processes. I share the conviction of many that the only way to understand these incredibly complex mental phenomena is to draw on the best work coming out of every discipline one can imagine. As anyone who does cross-disciplinary work knows, plunging into fields outside one’s expertise and training is overwhelming and scary, but I don’t think there is any other way to proceed. So, today I spend much of my research time floundering around in fields that take me far outside my comfort zones, and I try to help my students live with the anxiety and uncertainty one feels whenever he or she takes on interdisciplinary research.

However abstract or esoteric these topics might sound, there has always been another dimension of my personality that urges me to find ways to relate what I do to basic human issues of meaning and values. As I said earlier, that’s the whole reason I was attracted to philosophy in the first place. And so, I continue to struggle to figure out what difference, if any, it should make for our lives if we come to appreciate that mind is embodied, that all our thought emerges from bodily sources, that we are imaginative creatures, and that our values are tied to the aesthetic dimensions of our existence that are the basis for our ability to experience meaning. So, having this past July finally seen the publication of my latest book, The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding, I am just beginning to turn my attention to the question of where our values come from and how criticism of them is possible. During winter term I have a research fellowship from the Oregon Humanities Center to begin my first foray into this new area of interest.

Having just gone on and on about my research interests, I want to end by observing that, the older I get, what continues to matter most to me is not my research or publishing it, but instead getting my students excited about how some of these recent developments can help them deal with their deepest concerns about who they are, what matters most to them, and how they ought to live.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

What Is Philosophy?
Saturday, January 26, 2008
This conference features papers by faculty members and graduate and undergraduate students in the UO Department of Philosophy. The question “What is philosophy?” will be addressed from a variety of traditions and approaches, such as feminist, indigenous, ancient, analytic, Asian, American, and continental philosophy. Papers may emphasize a particular philosopher, a relationship between traditions, or a philosophical method. They may consider the consequences of philosophy’s interaction with other disciplines, such as the natural sciences, literature and poetry, or mathematics. We think that, given the diversity of philosophical approaches in our department, reflection on this question is especially pertinent. We assume the benefits of practicing philosophy from a variety of traditions, and yet we are not always certain how our colleagues go about it. It is our hope that this conference will nurture respect between different approaches, and potentially open our eyes to other ways of approaching our own work. In addition, we expect that it will strengthen the bonds between us by showing where our values and love of wisdom overlap. The conference will take place from 11:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in Knight Library’s Browsing Room. Refreshments provided. Please direct questions to slachanc@uoregon.edu or gsilva@uoregon.edu.

Chinese Philosophy: Confucian Virtues at Work
Sunday and Monday, March 2 and 3, 2008
“Confucian Virtues at Work” is based on the first collective study of virtue-ethical approaches to practical contemporary moral problems, Working Virtue: Virtue Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems (Oxford University Press, 2007). The conference extends this discussion of virtues in practice to the Chinese tradition. A wide variety of approaches will be represented among the papers presented by scholars of Chinese philosophy from around the country as well as in the responses by UO faculty members in philosophy, religious studies, and East Asian languages and literatures. The plenary session features the editors of Working Virtue, with the plenary address given by Philip J. Ivanhoe (City University of Hong Kong) and a response by Rebecca L. Walker (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). The conference is a joint effort of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Oregon Humanities Center, the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies, the Departments of Philosophy, Religious Studies, and East Asian Languages and Literatures, and the Office of the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies.

Latin American Scholars Conference
Thursday–Saturday, April 17–19, 2008
Enrique Dussel, a leading philosopher who currently works in Mexico, presents two papers drawn from his recent work in political philosophy. Due to his stature, other thinkers from around the country will attend and present papers on Dussel’s work. (The presentations will take place in Knight Library’s Browsing Room.) In preparation for this event, and in an effort to address burgeoning interest in Latin American thought in general, UO students have the opportunity to take a 2-credit course in Latin American philosophy at the 400/500 level.

Between Nature and Culture: After the Continental-Analytic Divide
Thursday and Friday, May 1 and 2, 2008
A joint project of the Department of Philosophy and the interdepartmental German Studies Committee, this conference comprises two days of presentations (eight to ten in all) with significant time for discussion. We will approach questions about the relationship between nature and culture-artifice from a number of different points of view, some connected to the analytic tradition, some indebted to the Continental tradition, some devoted to the project of overcoming or edging beyond what has become a somewhat reified opposition between these two traditions.

Society for Interdisciplinary Feminist Phenomenology Institute
Wednesday–Friday, May 28–30, 2008
A gathering of twelve scholars from Europe, Canada, and the U.S. for an intensive discussion about the project of feminist phenomenology will be held at Silver Falls Conference Center. Participants include Linda Fischer (Central European University), Sara Heinämaa (University of Helsinki, University of Oslo), Susan Cataldi (Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville), Sylvia Stöller (University of Vienna), Mariana Ortega (John Carroll University), Helen Fielding (University of Western Ontario), Gail Weiss (George Washington University), Eva Maria Sims (Duquesne University), and Beata Stawarska, Bonnie Mann, and two graduate students from the University of Oregon. This event was made possible by generous funding from the Center for the Study of Women in Society, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Department of Philosophy.

Society for Interdisciplinary Feminist Phenomenology Conference
Saturday, May 31, 2008
A one-day public conference taking place from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. features speakers from the SIFP Institute. The following is a tentative schedule of presenters: Linda Fischer with comments by Mariana Ortega; Sara Heinämaa with comments by Helen Fielding; Susan Cataldi with comments by Gail Weiss; and Silvia Stöller with comments by Eva Maria Sims. Everyone is welcome.

Thinking through Nature: Philosophy for an Endangered World
Thursday–Sunday, June 19–22, 2008
The philosophy department, in collaboration with the Environmental Studies Program and the Departments of Architecture and English, is organizing a four-day international conference on environmental theory in the humanities and arts. This event brings together 150 to 200 scholars from a range of disciplines to address such topics as environmental ethics, environmental aesthetics, ecocriticism, environmental design, traditional ecological knowledge, environmental justice, social ecology, ecofeminism, environmental education, interdisciplinarity, bioregionalism, science and technology studies, comparative environmental theory, and ecophenomenology. Keynote speakers include Donna Haraway (professor of the history of consciousness and women’s studies, UC Santa Cruz), John Llewelyn (emeritus reader in philosophy, University of Edinburgh), Gary Paul Nabhan (founder of Native Seeds/Search and director of the Center for Sustainable Environments, Northern Arizona University), and Alberto Pérez-Gómez (Saidye Rosner Bronfman Professor of the History of Architecture, McGill University). The conference is endorsed by the International Association for Environmental Philosophy and the International Society for Environmental Ethics. For more information on submitting a proposal (deadline December 1), visit www.uoregon.edu/~toadvice/IAEP/ThinkingThroughNature.html.
Faculty Notes

ERIN CLINE
Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies

My current research includes an article on the moral and religious authority of female spirit mediums based on my continuing fieldwork in southeastern China (made possible this summer by grants from the Center for Asian Pacific Studies and the College of Arts and Sciences). My work on moral psychology and political philosophy also continues, and in December my article, “Two Senses of Justice: Confucianism, Rawls, and Comparative Political Philosophy,” will appear in Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy. This fall I am enjoying teaching seminars on women and virtue in China and Mengzi and Xunzi, in addition to presenting papers at the Association for Asian Studies Western Conference, Willamette University, and the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion. I am also organizing the conference “Confucian Virtues at Work,” to be held at the University of Oregon on March 2–3, bringing together eight renowned scholars of Chinese thought from around the world and Oregon faculty members to set the tone for our emerging program in Chinese philosophy.

JOHN LYSAKER
Associate Professor and Department Head

Keep a look out in April for my new book, Emerson and Self-Culture. A brilliant painting from artist William Bailey graces the cover. During the summer I also finished the book I’ve written with my brother, Paul Lysaker. Entitled Schizophrenia and the Fate of the Self, my hope is that it will appear by the fall of 2008. As I finish up these projects (final revisions, proofing, indexing), I’ll also be writing an article on Heidegger’s thoughts on language and poetry, which should complement my winter seminar on Heidegger. I’m also participating in a series of reading groups, which is keeping me fresh. Alongside Heidegger and Walter Benjamin, another group concerning Latin American thought is an ongoing source of growth. And, if things go as planned, I should also offer a handful of public talks on the arts, both here and in Portland. I’ll try to keep alumni posted.

BONNIE MANN
Assistant Professor

Aside from ongoing reflection about the entanglements of war, national identity, sexuality and gender, this is what I’ve been up to: Since teaching the Beauvoir course last year, I’ve been working on an article in which I reject the common criticism that Beauvoir takes up a “masculine point of view” in The Second Sex. I argue that she actually both exemplifies and advocates for an approach that involves engaging and moving in and out of multiple points of view in order to allow a new point of view, neither masculine nor feminine but feminist, to gradually emerge. The other Beauvoir-related question that plagues me is reemerging as a central question in relation to Arendt and the course on her work I’m teaching this fall: What are feminists to do with nature? Having seen women equated with nature over the course of a long and egregious history (within the broader history of Western modernity’s disregard for the given limits of nature), what does it mean for feminists to “take up the realm of immanence,” as Beauvoir instructs, or to be humble in the face of the givens of the natural world as Arendt suggests all humans must be? I’m delighted with the extremely bright group of students in the Arendt course, and looking forward to teaching PHIL 315, Introduction to Feminist Philosophy, winter term. The Society for Interdisciplinary Feminist Phenomenology, which Beata Stawarska and I direct, will hold a three-day institute with eight invited guests from Europe and across the U.S. in the spring, followed by a one-day public conference on May 31, 2008, to which everyone is cordially invited.

SCOTT L. PRATT
Associate Professor and Interim Associate Dean of Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences

I have served as the associate dean of humanities since fall 2006. In addition to my administrative responsibilities last year, I led a yearlong graduate seminar on feminist pragmatism that focused on the work of American philosophers Jane Addams, Mary Whiton Calkins, Mary Parker Follett, and several contemporary philosophers including Donna Haraway and Karen Barad. I have two articles forthcoming or recently published: “Opera as Experience,” based on an invited talk to the Department of Music at the University of Notre Dame, to be published in The Journal of Aesthetic Education; and “The Experience of Pluralism,” published this fall in the Journal of Speculative Philosophy. I will continue as associate dean until June 2008, but will teach PHIL 325, Logic, Inquiry, and Argumentation, in winter 2008. I will also give talks this year at the Eastern and Pacific divisions meetings of the American Philosophical Association, an invited lecture at the University of Notre Dame, and an invited talk at the Central European Pragmatist Forum, to be held in Brno, Czech Republic.

TED TOADVINE
Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Environmental Studies

Beginning this fall, I am managing editor of the journal Environmental Philosophy, the official journal of the International Association for Environmental Philosophy (IAEP), which has relocated to the University of Oregon from the University of Toronto. The publication of the journal will be a joint venture of the philosophy department and the Environmental Studies Program, and the first double issue will be devoted to environmental aesthetics and ecological restoration. I am also planning a conference in conjunction with IAEP, “Thinking through Nature: Philosophy for an Endangered World,” to be held in Eugene next June. This fall I will attend a conference entitled “Space and Place” in Germany, where I have been invited to present a paper on the concept of place in the work of French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. For the centenary of Merleau-Ponty’s birth in 2008, I have been invited to present papers at conferences in Basel, Paris, and Lisbon.

NAOMI ZACK
Professor

I am on sabbatical during fall and winter terms, working on a monograph, half written in draft form, entitled The Specter of Disaster:
Graduate Profile

Elena Cuffari

Kari Swingle, my college adviser, smiled an odd, small smile and moved her pencil over a piece of computer paper, diagramming course requirements casually and haltingly. Sun lit the upstairs room in Whittier House, the odd, small building used by the Swarthmore math department, which was not exactly where I had expected to plan my undergrad career. Later, smoking an American Spirit in the courtyard or at the board in her syntax class, Kari would appear more in her element, if perpetually distracted. She looked up at me at our first meeting and asked curiously if I was sure I wanted to study linguistics.

The same question would be posed to me years later by the various members of the cognitive science faculty at UCSD when I was tentatively admitted to Rafael Nuñez’s lab on gesture and language. In both cases, the gentle skepticism turned out to be warranted, as my answer was no, or rather, not yes.

At Swarthmore, though I took linguistics classes throughout and eventually wrote a thesis on metaphor and iconicity in American Sign Language, I was quickly daunted by phrase structure rules and boys in black T-shirts and frizzy ponytails, who apparently are born knowing everything there is to know about infinite generativity. I felt a surge of relief in the spring of my freshman year when I received high praise on an essay written for my moral philosophy class. I switched priorities in favor of philosophy and applied to study abroad in Oxford for my junior year.

The lives and personalities of my tutors there had as significant an impact on my path after that point as the readings I did with them. Yanna Popova, who taught me semantics and introduced me to cognitive linguistics (primarily the work of Johnson and Lakoff), welcomed me into her home and her struggles as a new mother and academic in a rapidly growing field. Her passion for her work and the realities of her kitchen sketched out my future. Edward Kanterian, my postdoc philosophy tutor, pressed upon me the value of being ready to answer questions about the reality of a table, should I be at a dinner party one day and have to account for what I study. He also introduced me to Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer, and took me with more detail through the fascinating trajectory of Wittgenstein’s thought. The various approaches to language I found that year felt like a coming home. So did my visit to the University of Oregon a couple of years later and a couple of weeks after nearly deciding on a life in San Diego.

Having significant interests outside the domain of philosophy proper, yet repeatedly drawn to a certain style and way of thinking, I am very grateful to be working in this department. Since beginning my Ph.D. here last fall, that sense of rightness and fitness has only deepened, as each day I am introduced to new possibilities for meaning and being in the world. Intuitions about the intersections of cognitive linguistics and Heideggerian phenomenology that I couldn’t quite articulate in England now seem commonplace and, through the work and interests of our faculty and students, have widened and developed into new vocabularies and avenues.

This is one thread of one story that could be told about Elena and philosophy. It leaves out the constitutionally “melancholy” child who experienced angst about her parents dying whenever the water got cold in the bathtub, or the daughter of a former card-carrying Marxist who was given the Bible to quell anxiety and Will Durant to read at bedtime. It skips over mountains, Toby’s tofu, friends, microbrews, and other reasons it is good to call Eugene home. The only conclusion that works here is the lack of one, or further reflection on the meaning of the present situation: Go Ducks!

What’s New in Your Life?

Tell us what’s happening—send a class note to *The Thinking Duck*!

Through *The Thinking Duck*, we aim to keep you informed about the philosophy department and its work. We invite you to do the same and tell us about news in your life that we can include in an upcoming issue. We’re interested in awards, jobs, moves, family information, and even moments when philosophy has come to matter most for you. Please note changes in your address, employment, professional activities, or personal life that you would like to share with your classmates and colleagues in philosophy.

**Mail your information to** *The Thinking Duck*
1295 University of Oregon, Eugene OR 97403-1295

**E-mail:** philalum@uoregon.edu

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Employer _______________________ Business Phone __________________

Professional Title or Occupation __________________________

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